 **Ignatius Loyola**

Ignatius Loyola founded the Jesuits (the Society of Jesus). The Jesuits were one of the major spearheads of the Counter-Reformation. The work done by Ignatius Loyola was seen as an important counter to Martin Luther and John Calvin.

Ignatius Loyola was born in 1491 into a wealthy noble family. He was educated as a knight. Like many young men from his background, Loyola joined the army. In May 1521, he was wounded at the Battle of Pamplona while fighting against France. While Loyola recovered from his wounds he underwent a spiritual conversion. After reading about the lives of the Saints and of Christ, Loyola concluded that his life had been a sham and he decided to reform it. After claiming to have seen a vision of the Virgin Mary and the baby Jesus he went to the shrine of Our Lady at Montserrat in Aragon and became a hermit living in a cave near Mantua in 1522. He spent his time in rags confessing and scourging himself whilst helping the sick. "I will follow like a puppy dog if I can only find a way to salvation." Loyola threw himself at the mercy of God. He devoted hours each day to prayer and when he was not doing this he tended to the sick and poor.

In 1523, Loyola traveled to the Holy Land in an attempt to convert the Moors. However, he was sent back by the Franciscans to Italy. Loyola spent the next seven years learning Theology and Latin at Barcelona, Alcala and Salamanca universities and after this Loyola went to the college of Montaigu in Paris. He arrived in Paris at the same time as John Calvin was leaving!

His university education ended in 1535. During his time of studying Loyola collected eight followers who shared his beliefs. In August 1534, they swore obedience to the Pope and also took vows of poverty and chastity. Loyola and his followers determined to dedicate their lives as missionaries to the Holy Land.

On September 27th, 1540, the Society for Jesus received formal recognition from Pope Paul III. Loyola had been ordained as a priest in 1537 and he spent much time in Rome where he organised the work of the Jesuits as the order’s first General. Loyola had become convinced that he could not do his work within an existing order, hence his determination to start his own.

Loyola ensured that the Jesuit movement was highly disciplined and that all followers knew by heart his ‘Spiritual Exercises’ and ‘Constitution’. Education and self-examination were at the heart of the movement and after years of training, a Jesuit was considered fully prepared to carry out his work in the world.

By the time of Loyola’s death in 1556, there were an estimated 1,000 Jesuits organized into eleven units. Nine of these units were in Europe, one was in Brazil and the other was in the Far East.

Symptomatic of the training initiated by Loyola was the work done by the likes of John Gerrard, a Jesuit who worked in England. Gerrard was caught and imprisoned in the Tower of London where he was tortured. Despite this, Gerrard was one of the few men to escape from this fortress. Rather than leave for the relative safety of Europe, he remained in England to continue with his work.

Another who set the highest standards for the Jesuits was Francis Xavier. He was one of the original followers of Loyola and was one of the greatest missionaries of all time. In 1541, he was invited to go to the East Indies by John III of Portugal. Xavier was from an aristocratic family yet he found himself on a filthy ship devastated by fever. He washed, scrubbed and cooked for all the people on board. He went to Goa, Travancore, Malacca, Molucca Isles, Sri Lanka and Japan. Xavier eventually died near Hong Kong thus failing in his wish to get to China. Xavier very much lived up to the standards imposed on the Jesuits by Loyola. He traveled extensively in great hardship but it is estimated that Xavier converted more than 700,000 people to the Catholic faith.

Ignatius Loyola’s Jesuits transformed the Roman Catholic Church in terms of quality and they became a vital part of the Counter-Reformation. Ignatius Loyola was canonized in 1622.

**Origin of the Society of Jesus**

Community life in the Society of Jesus is based on the companionship of Ignatius of Loyola and the graduate students he befriended at the University of Paris. Seven students gathered in a chapel on Montmartre Hill in 1534 and vowed to continue their companionship after finishing their degrees. They would live in evangelical poverty and go on a mission to Jerusalem. They called themselves "amigos en el Senor" -- friends in the Lord.

"It's always said that the Jesuits were founded by Ignatius of Loyola, but I like the thought that the Jesuits were founded by a committee, not by one man. And it's crucial because if the real mainspring of Jesuit spirituality is companionship, then our being together in a company is really right out of that reality, that we are together in a companionship."

Inigo Lopez de Loyola, who later took the name Ignatius, was the youngest son of a nobleman of the mountainous Basque region of northern Spain. Trained in the courtly manner of the time of King Ferdinand, he dreamed of the glories of knighthood and wore his sword and breastplate with a proud arrogance.

When Ignatius was born in 1491, the Middle Ages were just ending and Europe was entering into the Renaissance. So Ignatius was a man on the edge of two worlds.

Europe of the late 15th Century was a world of discovery and invention. European explorers sailed west to the Americas and south to Africa, and scholars uncovered the buried civilizations of Greece and Rome. The printing press fed a new hunger for knowledge among a growing middle class. It was the end of chivalry and the rise of a new humanism. It was a time of radical change, social upheaval, and war.

In a quixotic attempt in 1521 to defend the Spanish border fortress of Pamplona against the French artillery, Inigo's right leg was shattered by a cannon ball. His French captors, impressed by the Inigo's courage, carried him on a litter across Spain to his family home at Loyola where he began a long period of convalescence.

During that time, he read several religious books, the only reading material readily available. These books and the isolation of the recovery period brought about a conversion which led to the founding of the Jesuits. Ignatius began to pray. He fasted, did penance and works of charity, dedicated himself to God and, after some troubles with the Spanish Inquisition, decided to study for the priesthood.

As a student in Paris he drew a small band of friends to himself and directed them in extended prayer and meditation according to his Spiritual Exercises. After further studies, the first Jesuits were ordained to the Catholic priesthood in Venice and offered themselves in service to Pope Paul III. In 1540, Paul III approved the Institute of the Society of Jesus. Ignatius was elected General Superior and served in that post until his death in 1556 at the age of 65.

**John Calvin**

John Calvin was born in 1509. He died in 1564. John Calvin was the son of a lawyer. He was born in Noyon, Picardy and was therefore a Frenchman. Calvin developed a love for scholarship and literature.

In 1523 he went to the University of Paris where he studied theology.

To maintain himself while a student, Calvin secured a small chaplaincy attached to Noyon Cathedral.

In 1528 he went to Orleans to study Law, and one year later Calvin went to Bourges also to study Law.

Calvin was pressurised by his father to study Law but in 1531 his father died giving Calvin the freedom to resume his religious studies.

In the same year that his father died, Calvin went to the College de France in Paris to study Greek. This college was noted for its Humanistic approach to learning. In fact, all the colleges that Calvin attended had Humanistic leanings and it was only natural that this influenced Calvin. He became an admirer of Erasmus.

At some point between 1528 and 1533 he experienced a "sudden conversion" and grasped Protestantism. "God subdued my soul to docility by a sudden conversion" was how Calvin described this experience.

Many historians look on the time from 1531 to 1533 as being the key time as this was the first time that he had been free from his father’s ‘shackles’. Calvin was highly critical of the abuses in the French Catholic church but he never doubted that he was God’s chosen instrument in the spiritual regeneration of the world.

At this time in France his ideas would have been heretical especially after the Day of the Placards incident when Francis I felt personally threatened by the Protestants and joined with the Sorbonne and the Parlément of Paris to hunt out heretics. Calvin lived at a dangerous time for heretics and in 1533 he fled Paris. In the following year 24 heretics were burned at the stake. For three years (1533 to 1536) he roamed France, Italy and Switzerland.

In 1536 the first edition of "Institutes of the Christian Religion" was published in Basle. It was revised on a number of occasions and the final edition was published in 1559. This book was a clear explanation of his religious beliefs. The later versions expanded on how his church should be organized.

In July 1536, Calvin went to Geneva which became the centre of his work. He had been trying to go to Strasbourg but the spread of the Habsburg-Valois Wars made him detour to Geneva where a fiery Protestant called Guillaume Farel persuaded him to stay.

Geneva was a French-speaking Swiss city. At the time of Calvin’s arrival the city was struggling to achieve independence against two authorities who were trying to exercise control over Geneva. The first was the Dukes of Savoy and the second was the Bishop of Geneva. Geneva was not yet part of Switzerland (not until 1815) and the city allied with the cantons of Bern and Fribourg against Savoy. The bishop fled Geneva and Savoy was defeated in 1535.

In May 1536 the city adopted religious reform:

1) monasteries were dissolved

2) Mass was abolished

3) Papal authority renounced

But within Geneva itself a struggle took place between those who wanted mild reform (such as no compulsory church attendance) and those who demanded radical reform such as Calvin and Farel. The split was deeper than this however. The mild reformers were called the Libertines and they wanted magistrates firmly in control of the clergy. Calvin wanted a city controlled by the clergy - a theocracy. In 1538, the Libertines won the day and Farel and Calvin fled the city and went to Strasbourg.

From 1538 to 1541 Calvin stayed in Strasbourg. Here he learned a lot about the ideas of Martin Bucer; a moderate Protestant reformer from Germany. Calvin was especially interested in Bucer’s ideas on ecclesiastical organization.

In 1540 Calvin attended a Catholic/Protestant conference at Hagenau and in the following year he attended similar conferences at Worms and Regensburg.

In September 1541 Calvin returned to Geneva after the Libertines had fallen from power in 1540. It took Calvin 14 years before he could fully impose his version of liturgy, doctrine, organization of the church and moral behavior.

Calvin’s services were plain and simple. He placed great importance on the sermon. His sermons were very logical and learned. Though he himself liked music, he distrusted its use in religious services believing that it distracted people from the matter in hand - the worship and the seeking knowledge of God. Musical instruments were banned from churches - though congregational singing was permitted and this proved to be both popular and an effective way of ‘spreading’ the message. All matters relating to worship came from the Scriptures - so psalms took the place of hymns in services.